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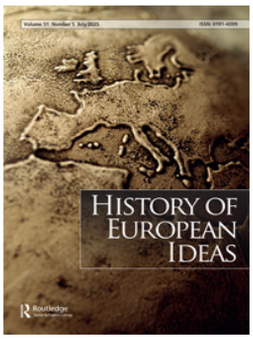

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The Politics of Restoration Playbook Dedications

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ABSTRACT

The dedications to Restoration play quartos were an important part of what readers could expect to find when they picked up a late seventeenth-century playbook. Addressed to aristocrats, celebrities, politicians, and other leading figures of the day, the printed play dedication has been read by later generations of historians and literary scholars as one of the surest means we have of decoding the politics and ideological investments of Restoration dramatists and their works. This article revisits and overturns this assumption by arguing instead that Restoration playbook dedications and their politics need to be read in dialogue with the commercial pressures of contemporary book-trade practices. I argue that the politics of playbooks were inextricable from print marketplace concerns by combining quantitative and qualitative analysis of the dedications produced during the Exclusion Crisis (1679–81) with a closely contextualised analysis of Jacob Tonson's quarto edition of Aphra Behn's *The Second Part of the Rover* (1681).

KEYWORDS

Aphra Behn; dedications; Exclusion Crisis; Jacob Tonson; patronage; playbooks

> Scribles of this Nature are usually design'd only to insinuate the Author into the good Opinion of his Patron; but besides that, *my Lord,* I must confess another meaning, … I think it is my Duty … to thank you for your late Loyalty, Diligence, and unwearied service of the King, against the Rebels; in which you faithfully shew'd the unvalued Vertue of your Temper, sparing no Cost, nor ommitting no Stratagem, that could advance to the eternal fixing our Great (tho' then scarce settl'd) Monarch in this Throne as once your Immortal, and I hope (never forgotten) Father, did the late glorious Prince before.[1]

The dedications to Restoration playbooks are usually read as the most transparent of political texts. It is easy to see why, as shown by my epigraph, taken from Thomas D'Urfey's dedication of his 1685 tragicomedy *A Commonwealth of Women* to Christopher Monck, 2nd Duke of Albemarle (1653–88). There, despite the humility topos which renders such dedicatory acts as mere 'Scribles', D'Urfey laid bare his allegiances for his Tory patron as

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This article on dedications is dedicated to the memory of Professor Robert D. Hume. It was Rob who first encouraged me to consider the intersection of quantitative and qualitative modes of analysis in theatre studies and to read playbook dedications for what they might reveal about the relationships between politics and the print culture of Restoration England.

well as those anonymised addressees who picked up a copy of the 1686 quarto printing of the play for a shilling from a London bookshop. The play was first performed and then printed in the aftermath of the disastrous Monmouth rebellion of June 1685, where Charles II's illegitimate son and sometime darling of the Whig cause, James Scott, 1st Duke of Monmouth (1649–85), led an ill-fated coup which attempted to wrest the crown from King James II and restore a Protestant monarch to the throne.[2] D'Urfey's dedication described those engaged in this conspiracy as 'Rebels' and hymned the virtues of those like his patron who, at considerable personal cost, remained steadfastly loyal to the Stuart dynasty. Albemarle, frankly, needed this PR. As Robin Clifton has demonstrated, he had singularly failed to offer much by way of resistance to the Monmouth rebels, misdirecting the troops of his Devon militia and was eventually even 'upbraided by the king for his slack performance'.[3] When D'Urfey compared Albermarle to his 'Immortal … Father', the great military strategist and eminent architect of the Restoration settlement, George Monck, 1st Duke of Albemarle (1608–1670), it was a stretch. That stretch was, however, cushioned or enabled by the grandiloquent norms and hyperbolic turn of the prefatory dedication as a genre or mode of address; it was also born of political sympathy and the need for the favours that aristocracy could confer upon a professional dramatist struggling to make his way.

Compared to the play texts that followed them, the politics of prefatory dedications are, from a certain perspective, therefore, straightforwardly legible. Restoration plays, political at every turn, are, after all, multi-modal, multi-voiced, character-driven forms of entertainment and can be stubbornly resistant to yielding a coherent view of the politics of their authors.[4] Given the difficulty in tracing authorial commitments in the dramas themselves, it is perhaps unsurprising that scholars of the period's history and literature have mined dedications to quarto playbooks to unearth the allegiances and intentions of seventeenth-century dramatists and the influential individuals whose favour they cultivated. For researchers they can be printed lifelines when the archival manuscript trail runs cold and, especially, are a way-marker for biographers searching for evidence to connect their subjects with other people with shared outlooks or tastes.[5]

Tempting as it is to regard printed play dedications as providing unfettered access to authorial intention or politics, however, this article contends that they are primarily material properties of the seventeenth-century book, paratextual matter whose existence was chiefly the result of bookshop negotiations conducted for the benefit of all of those engaged in trade (authors, printers, stationers, and consumers). As we will see, not all Restoration playbooks carried a dedication; their presence or absence hinged on the decision taken by the bookseller who financed the venture as to whether the status of author, dedicatee, or the contents of the dedication warranted the additional time and expense that adding it to the original play text would entail. My analysis reveals that the politics of Restoration drama – and the distinctive ways in which they might be verbalised in printed dedications – were always enmeshed with and mediated by the commercial interests of the book trade.[6]

What follows shows that dedications could be vital marketing materials which sold the texts they adorned by enabling anonymised readers to join celebrities or eminent individuals (the stated addressees of the dedications) in interpretive communities.[7] In giving readers supplementary textual material that they could never encounter in the theatre, dedications, however toadyish in their flattery, however acute in their political critique,

also insisted that printed plays were substantial texts worth the shilling that punters might pay for them because they were much more than wan imitations or static facsimiles of dynamic performances before live audiences. I first offer an overview of the practice of playbook dedication in the period before anchoring my analysis in a case study of Aphra Behn's *The Second Part of the Rover* (1681), a comedy dedicated to James, Duke of York, and printed in a notoriously difficult year at the height of the Exclusion Crisis. Focusing on Behn's play enables us to work in the gap between a performance which derided the business of play dedication as nothing more than grossly hyperbolic rhetoric and the production of a book which clearly declared that dedications did the most urgent political work. Situating Behn's play in the 1680–1 theatrical season, a year which, as Mark Knights has argued, was the most critical period of the Exclusion Crisis, I demonstrate that the dedications attached to Restoration playbooks were as much expressions of a playwright's and their stationer's mutual commercial interests and entanglements in the seventeenth-century book trade as they were straightforward declarations of political commitment to any particular side during that climactic year.[8]

The practice of playbook dedication

For all that late seventeenth-century English theatre is commonly associated with excess and privilege – its aesthetic 'baroque', its allegiances 'courtly' or aristocratic – its professional dramatists frequently complained that they were struggling to make ends meet in an impecunious business.[9] Even the most successful of those who wrote for the Restoration stage – Aphra Behn, John Dryden, Thomas Shadwell, Thomas Southerne – regularly lamented the immiserating poverty occasioned by their craft. They were, as one contemporary remarked, 'bards … famished by their wit', reliant on the favour of theatre audiences to ensure that their work at least stayed in the repertory for three days, when they would be entitled to an evening's box-office takings, which, for a packed house, could range from £60 in the 1660s to as much as £140 for smash hits like Southerne's *Fatal Marriage* in 1694.[10] While such noteworthy windfalls were lucrative and eagerly sought after, they were also unusual and unpredictable, proving especially elusive during the period of the Exclusion Crisis, when playhouses were, as we will see, struggling to stay afloat and frequently operating at very far from capacity.[11] In such trying circumstances, professional playwrights who wrote for a living – as opposed to aristocratic theatre practitioners – turned to two related sources of additional income to sustain themselves: aristocratic patronage and the sale of their plays to London's booksellers.

These smaller revenue streams converged in the printed dedications that prefaced many Restoration playbooks. Derided by contemporaries as a 'mean and mercenary art', and by later scholars as a 'thick mess of unction', the habit of dedication was nonetheless enduring and extensive and represented a marked change from pre-civil war playbook publishing which, since drama remained a relatively undervalued print commodity until the publication of the Jonson and Shakespeare folios of the early seventeenth century, did not carry honorific dedications with anything like the same frequency.[12] Addressed to eminent members of society – kings, duchesses, royal mistresses, politicians, booksellers, and brothel madams – dedications were primarily designed to glorify potential patrons, connecting authors and the anonymised readers of their printed plays with a firmament of celebrities who illuminated London's fashionable

theatre world. Even after the stars of playwrights and their dedicatees had dimmed or vanished, dedications endured since they were very seldom altered or retracted across successive playbook editions, which says much about their primary status as book properties owned by copy-holding stationers rather than personal documents tracing the quasi-privacies of a dramatist's patronal relationships at particular moments in time.[13]

The primary goal of dedications was self-consciously elaborate praise or *epideixis*. However, these texts, running anywhere from one hundred to over three thousand words, and, in genre terms, poised somewhere between the familiar epistle and formal panegyric, traversed a wide variety of topics.[14] They discussed art, fashion, history, literature, politics and could also trade in the gossip and rumour surrounding the theatres and the famous people who frequented them. Contemporaries used them as manuals of style, as was the case with the dedication of Dryden's *Marriage a-la-Mode* (1673) to John Wilmot, second Earl of Rochester, noted for the delicacy of its gallantries in contemporary commonplace books.[15] The pioneering seventeenth-century English theatre historian, Gerard Langbaine (1656–92), was obsessed by the development of the dedicatory habit, recording the dedicatees of all the Restoration plays he had read when compiling his landmark *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (1691).

Langbaine was interested in dedications for what they said about a playwright's biography, chiefly which authors were associated with which members of the aristocracy and when. However, they are also important for what they tell us about the interplay of two economic systems in early modern society, between an older patronal economy, in which wealthy individuals dispensed capital, favour, or prestige to artists, and a relatively recent set of commercial imperatives which saw professionalised theatre writers selling copy directly to booksellers in a print marketplace.[16] Later generations of historians and literary scholars have largely followed Langbaine's lead in attending, fruitfully, to the first of these economic systems, reading dedications for what insights they might yield about relationships between particular patrons and their client-creatives.[17] However, as we shall see, the dedications themselves frequently say as much about their authors' involvement in the book trade and how stationers positioned playwrights and their works before a paying reading public.

The amounts of money that individual playwrights received from patrons for dedications and other services are difficult to quantify because evidence is scarce and such anecdotes that do survive record payments that were extraordinary rather than the norm. In a famous story, John Dryden reputedly discovered £100 under his plate during dinner when on a visit to his patron, the Earl of Dorset; much later, following his fall from favour and his loss of the Laureateship after the Whig victories of 1688, Dorset reportedly softened the blow by giving Dryden 100 guineas for the dedication of the folio edition of his translation of Juvenal.[18] In contrast to such tales of astonishing largesse, there is the evidence of Thomas Shadwell who had to badger his patron Dorset for quarterly payment of a £10 stipend (it was pretty much always in arrears).[19] While the records of money paid by stationers to dramatists for play manuscripts is equally scant – there are just three surviving examples from the entire period – Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume have estimated that a playwright might receive between £5 and £10 for their sale of copy of a single play in the late seventeenth century; if such amounts were relatively unspectacular, they were, at least, contractual and predictable, less reliant on the whims of audience taste or patronal generosity.[20] Making a playbook as saleable as possible was, therefore, an enterprise in which both stationer and playwright shared a significant investment and some

booksellers clearly thought that including a dedication to an eminent individual enhanced the prospects of success.

Not all booksellers agreed on this as there were several factors to consider when deciding whether the inclusion of a dedication would enhance the chances of a good return on their expenses, including the initial outlay for copy. Had the play enjoyed a successful run at the theatre? If not, and the bookseller had already paid for the manuscript, a dedication to a member of the cognoscenti might ameliorate the situation and help drive sales. Should the play have done well in the theatre, could a dedication be supplied promptly enough to ensure that it was still relatively fresh in the minds of the theatre-going public who might be among the most reliable buyers of the book afterwards? The polite convention of needing to secure permission from the dedicatee for the dedication was not necessarily the work of a moment, especially where the parties did not know each other beforehand.[21] Was the playwright sufficiently well-connected to induce a satisfactorily eye-catching dedicatee to lend their name to the work? While the publishers of John Tatham's *The Rump* and his various civic entertainments had included dedications in their playbooks produced shortly after the Restoration, it was the first major literary bookseller of the period, Henry Herringman, who professionalised the practice in his editions of plays by Dryden and Thomas Shadwell, two of the most bankable playwrights of the day, including dedications in 86% and 80% of their sole-authored works respectively.[22] Such percentages seem unusually high, especially in light of Stanley L. Archer's brief but influential 1971 essay 'The Epistle Dedicatory in Restoration Drama', which demonstrates that only 50% of playbooks carried a dedication between 1660 and 1700.[23] The rest of this article will interrogate and nuance Archer's headline statistic via an analysis of printed play production during the challenging period of the Exclusion Crisis in order to shed further light on the intersection of politics and the playbook trade.

Aphra Behn and playbook dedication during the Exclusion Crisis

Times were especially hard for theatre practitioners at the height of the Exclusion Crisis. Fearing the very real possibility of civil unrest or preferring to spend their surplus income on pamphlets, audiences absented themselves from the theatres forcing playwrights to seek new ways to entertain those that remained in order to make a living. Aphra Behn reflected on this situation in the epilogue to *The Second Part of the Rover* (1681), confessing that she had run out of road, having found the political inclinations and aesthetic preferences of London theatre-goers entirely contrary to her Tory instincts. Thus, the actress Elizabeth Barry brought Behn's play to a close by delivering an epilogue that told the audience what their beliefs had done to the creatives in her industry:

> Our Poets must find out another Trade;
> They've try'd all ways the insatiate Clan to please,
> Have parted with their old Prerogatives: …
> And write against their Consciences, to show
> How dull they can be to comply with you,
> They've flatter'd all the Mutineers 'ith' Nation,
> Grosser than e're was done in Dedication.[24]

Hostile or demanding audiences are here compared to Exclusionists or Whigs, an 'insatiate Clan' of 'Mutineers 'ith' Nation', whose excessive influence causes dramatists to forgo

artistic first principles in much the same way that a rebellious parliament, fomenting the current constitutional crisis, had weakened loyalty to the Stuarts. To please their audiences, Behn archly maintains, playwrights had become crushingly dull, their plays no more imaginative than the cloying, hyperbolic, or gross dedications to potential patrons that prefaced them when they were transformed into quarto playbooks.

This view of dedications as an artistic nadir sat rather oddly when the play made its way into print a few weeks after its initial run at the Dorset Garden theatre. This is because the quarto, published by an emerging, entrepreneurial bookseller called Jacob Tonson the Elder (1655–1736), was prefaced by a remarkable dedication by Behn to the Duke of York in which she credited him with inspiring the play because of the enthusiasm he had expressed for its prequel *The Rover* (1677). In her dedication she offered a passionate High Tory defence of the Duke. This was a bold and eye-catching move because he was effectively exiled to Scotland to act as the king's Lord High Commissioner in Edinburgh from October 1679 as, with the Exclusion Crisis intensifying, he had become a lightning rod for criticism of the Stuart regime.[25] During his absence in early November 1680, a few months before the première of Behn's play, parliament passed a second Exclusion Bill which accused the Duke of York of fomenting 'horrid Plots and Conspiracies, for the Destruction of his Majesty's sacred Person … and for the Extirpation of the true Protestant Religion'; he should, they argued, be 'excluded, and made for ever uncapable to inherit, possess, or enjoy the imperial Crown of this Realm'.[26] In December, Anthony Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftesbury (1621–83) even gave a speech to the House of Lords which claimed that the Duke's removal to Scotland was actually a military move to raise a land army 'ready … when he shall have notice' from his Roman Catholic masters to destroy English forces.[27] Behn's dedication directly countered such arguments, in a move favoured by other Tory polemicists, by styling those who would exclude the Duke from succession to the throne as revenant regicidal parliamentarians from earlier in the century:

> You, Great Sir with a Fortitude worthy Your Adorable Vertues, put Your self upon a voluntary Exile to appease the causeless murmurs of this again gathering Faction, … whil'st the Politick self-interested and malitious few betray the unconsidering Rest, with the delicious sounds of Liberty and Publick Good … whil'st they most unjustly cry'd down the oppression of one of the best of Monarchs, and all Kingly Government.[28]

While Behn's Whig contemporaries would certainly have regarded this as a gross dedication, it was an exceptional and ambitious act of Tory partisanship on her part. Even if other playwrights, and the Duke's theatre company itself, celebrated the Duke of York's return from exile a year later in early 1682 with the Crisis safely passed, Behn was the only dramatist to dedicate a play to him during his Edinburgh period.[29] In late seventeenth-century terms, then, this was dedication as loyalty.

Behn herself admitted that she only came to the business of playbook dedication relatively late. Even though her plays had been printed and performed since 1671, *The Second Part of the Rover* was the tenth play bearing her name on its title-page, but only the second to carry a dedication. This was in marked contrast to her professional contemporaries Dryden and Shadwell who, in their work with the bookseller Henry Herringman, had been dedicating their plays from their very first appearances in print. The chief reason for Behn's tardiness in dedicating her plays was probably gender-related; as the

first successful professional woman dramatist of the period she was painfully conscious of how publicity was regarded differently (and more censoriously) for her than it was for her male contemporaries, and of how the cultural capital bestowed upon successful artists was unevenly distributed between the sexes.[30] But a secondary reason for her late and intermittent adoption of the dedicatory habit was likely the influence of the different booksellers who financed the printing of her plays.

Behn's first play to feature a dedication, *The Feign'd Curtizans* (1679), was also the first of her works to be sole published by Jacob Tonson, who was also the stationer for *The Second Part of the Rover*. Dedicating her earlier play to Nell Gwynn, retired actress and former mistress of Charles II, Behn apologised for having failed to do so earlier, thanking her dedicatee for expressly allowing her to dedicate the present edition to her: 'your permission, madam, has enlightened me, and I with shame look back on my past ignorance, which suffered me not to pay an adoration long since where there was so very much due'.[31] That reference to her 'past ignorance' looks remarkably like a confession that, until she began publishing with Tonson, she did not know how the business of play dedication worked. It is entirely plausible, therefore, that it was Tonson who suggested the move to her. Behn's dedicatory rhetoric championing Gwynn's beauty, intelligence, sexuality, the illegitimate children that she had with king, as well as decrying 'a malicious world that will allow a woman no wit' was, however, her own distinctive work.[32]

If Behn was slow to dedicate, she quickly picked up some of the form's usual rhetorical flourishes. She thanked Gwynn for the 'sanctuary' she offered to her work in print, convinced that 'under so gracious an influence my tender laurels may thrive'.[33] This was a version of one of the most common tropes of dramatic dedications in this period: that the dedicatee offered a play that has made its way into print 'protection' which might help to ensure a favourable reception among its print readership. Thus when *The Second Part of the Rover* appeared in 1681, Behn told the Duke of York that he offered her play quarto 'a shelter and a protection'.[34] Such rhetoric was long-established and signalled a concern that dramatists had about the censorious critical judgments of a reading public, who with an interpretive leisure denied those watching live theatre entertainment in an auditorium, might decry a playbook and inhibit its sale. The approbation or approval of a celebrity that a dedication implied might, however, tip the balance in a playwright and stationer's favour, or, at least, convince consumers to buy a book that was also potentially being read in fashionable circles.

Thus Thomas D'Urfey's first playbook, *The Siege of Memphis*, was dedicated to Henry Chevers in the hope that he would 'secure it from the peircing *Tallons of Eagle-Eyed Critics* … The censures of others will the less trouble me when you protect it.'[35] The dedication to John Dryden's heroic play *The Indian Emperour* (1667) made much the same point; acknowledging that it was the court who had encouraged the fashion for such rhymed dramas in the repertory, he offered it to the Duchess of Monmouth, nervous about its 'being now more publickly expos'd in Print' and 'humbly recommend[ing] it to your Graces Protection, who by all knowing persons [is] esteem'd a Principal Ornament of the Court'.[36] When George Etherege dedicated one of the most bankable theatrical hits of the entire period, *The Man of Mode*, to the Duchess of York in 1676 he was even clearer about the protection that a dedicatee offered a playbook and its author: 'Your Protection will be … fortunate to it in the Printing; for all are so ambitious of making

their Court to You, that none can be severe to what you are pleas'd to favour.'[37] In 1681, when the Exclusion Crisis was at its most intense, a dedication might be thought to be especially important, helping to 'protect' or sell a playbook at a time when declining footfall at the theatres potentially further imperilled the trade in that particular commodity.

Dramatists were clearly worried about the sustainability of their craft in this period, and it would have been odd if their booksellers did not share some of this anxiety. The original audience for Behn's *Second Part of the Rover*, several hours before they had heard Elizabeth Barry opining about grossness of dedications, witnessed the actor William Smith speaking a prologue which reminded them of their duty to stop politicking abroad and turn up to watch plays instead: '*spare some time from your dear new Vocation:/ (Of drinking deep, then settleing the Nation,) / To countenance us* [players] … *since all agree i'th' crowded Theatre*'.[38] In the ancient world, he reproved them, '*none forsook* [theatres] *in any Change or War.*'[39] This reflection on falling theatre numbers was mirrored in another Duke's company play from the same 1680–81 theatrical season. '*Play-Houses* like forsaken Barns are grown … And so the Vizards cackle here no more', lamented John Crowne, linking the fortunes of the theatre and the sex trade during the Exclusion Crisis in the prologue to his adaptation of Shakespeare's *I Henry VI*.[40] If things were bad with the Duke's Company, they were even worse over at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane; by the second half of the 80–1 season, King's Company receipts were so low, that the players even stopped performing for a while, judging it not worth their time.[41] Elkanah Settle reflected upon the reception of his tragedy *Fatal Love* (1680) under these conditions. It:

> breath'd … in a [theatrical] Season, when Poetry even with its softest and most Curious Aires, to the Ears of this untunable Age, sounds but harsh and unpleasant: nay, and what's yet worst of all, perform'd by the feeble Fragment of a Company — … Tis true, the *Theatre Royal* was once all Harmony … But when this hapless Play came forth, its sweetest Pipes were stopt; and like a shatter'd Organ, it had only left what could do little more than squeak and jar.[42]

The Exclusion Crisis, Settle contends, was a cultural as much as a political calamity, the age itself 'untunable' or permanently discordant, hostile to the very idea of theatrical entertainment in the capital.

In that same difficult year, John Dryden, who had long had close working relationships with his booksellers, spared a thought for those who made their living selling playbooks to the public. Dryden had recently begun working with Tonson, a partnership that would endure until the end of the century and transform the nature of literary publishing in English, but even he was worried about the wellbeing of playbook sellers and the precarious nature of the trade. His farce, *The Spanish Fryar* (1681), which premiered a few weeks before Behn's *The Second Part of the Rover* and was sold by the same bookseller, was prefaced by some reflections on how much harder it was to please a print readership than a theatre audience:

> I have often heard the Stationer sighing in his shop, and wishing for those hands to take off his melancholy bargain which clapp'd its Performance on the Stage. In a Play-house every thing contributes to impose upon the Iudgment; the Lights, the Scenes, the Habits, and, above all, the Grace of Action … But these false Beauties of the Stage are no more lasting than a Rainbow; when the Actor ceases to shine upon them, when he guilds them no longer with his reflection, they vanish in a twinkling.[43]

It seems likely that Dryden is sympathising with booksellers in general rather than Tonson specifically here. But the implication of his observation is clear: even when plays were good and theatres were full and profitable, producing playbooks for a readership could be an uncertain or risky business for all of those engaged in the trade. A prefatory dedication to a printed playbook might mitigate that risk somewhat, especially in a year like 1681 where the size of London's theatre-going public, a significant proportion of the play-reading market, was severely diminished. Booksellers and authors might, in other words, choose to leverage the symbolic or cultural capital of a dramatic dedication to the eminent or well-connected and relieve potential book buyers of some of their money.

The following tables substantiate this impression. Figure 1 uses data from the ESTC and Sylvia Wagonheim's revised third edition of *The Annals of English Drama* to show the distribution and frequency of playbook dedication for the entire quarter century of Charles II's reign.[44] These numbers are for new playbooks only, based on works that were performed, excluding play manuscripts as well as printings of pamphlet plays, closet drama, and reprints or revised editions. The headline period figure of 53% dedicated playbooks is remarkably close to Stanley Archer's original figure of 50% and says much about the rigour of his research well before the advent of online library catalogues and digital facsimiles of playbooks. However, the year-on-year variations revealed below show how, during the tumultuous years of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis (1678–81), the frequency of playbook dedication increased significantly above the period average to a mean of 67%, even rising, in difficult years like 1681, to 82%. From a certain angle, then, Behn's dedication of *The Second Part of the Rover* to the Duke of York in that year is perhaps less unusual than it might appear since the majority of her peers publishing plays at that time were also going to the trouble of dedicating their work. But, from another vantage point, this practice can be regarded as peculiar to those with a specific interest in selling playbooks. In contrast to the diachronic perspective afforded by Figure 1, Figure 2 offers a synchronic snapshot of the trade in all new quarto books in 1681; the data here is restricted to quartos because these books were sold at a similar price point to playbooks, and, moreover, expensive formats like folio, as prestige commodities, were much more likely to carry an honorific dedication. The data in the second table is derived from the ESTC and the 1681 *Term Catalogues* and compares the presence of dedications in playbooks in that year to the frequency of such paratexts in all other quartos, using the descriptive book categories that Restoration stationers themselves used to advertise their wares to potential customers.[45] Playbooks were clearly much more likely to carry a dedication than the most popular and saleable book types from that year. Only 44% of quarto works of divinity, which included sermons, carried a dedication, whereas just 10% of the capacious category of quarto 'Miscellanies' – comprising works of astronomy, linguistics, philosophy, translations, travel writing, as well as controversial pamphlet literature – had one.[46] Such data gives added credence to the suggestion that Restoration playwrights and their stationers turned to dedication in 1681 because adverse conditions specific to their particular sector of the book trade – plays were simply not as in-demand as pamphlets in that year – necessitated it.

Behn's The *Second Part of The Rover* was dedicated to the Duke of York, then, when the majority of her peers were also fixing dedications to their works. While a reasonable interpretation for this unusual upsurge might be to read it as indicative of the political polarisation of

Date	New Quartos	Dedications	% Dedicated
1660	6	3	50
1661	5	2	40
1662	3	1	33
1663	11	3	27
1664	10	3	30
1665	2	0	0
1666	1	1	100
1667	6	2	33
1668	9	2	22
1669	5	1	20
1670	5	3	60
1671	15	8	53
1672	11	9	82
1673	15	7	47
1674	8	3	38
1675	14	8	57
1676	13	10	77
1677	26	14	54
1678	**22**	**12**	**55**
1679	**13**	**10**	**77**
1680	**17**	**11**	**65**
1681	**11**	**9**	**82**
1682	18	8	44
1683	5	2	40
1684	8	5	63
1685	8	4	50
TOTALS	267	141	53

Figure 1. Frequency and percentage of printed dedications in new quarto playbooks, 1660–85 (Exclusion-Crisis Data in bold).

the Exclusion Crisis (as polemical battlelines hardened more people wrote dedications that advertised their allegiances in the constitutional impasse), the evidence does not bear that out. Of the nine play dedications printed in that year, only Dryden and D'Urfey wrote

CATEGORY	DEDICATED	UNDEDICATED	TOTAL	% Dedicated
Divinity	62	78	140	44
History	1	8	9	11
Law	0	5	5	0
Libri Latini	7	17	24	29
Mathematics	1	1	2	50
Miscellanies	22	206	228	10
Physick	0	3	3	0
Plays	9	2	11	82
Poems	2	8	10	20
OVERALL	**104**	**328**	**432**	**24**

Figure 2. Printed quarto dedications by book category, 1681.

dedications as partisan as that prefacing Behn's *The Second Part of the Rover*. Dryden, the most consistent, imaginative, and vigorous dedicator of the entire period, offered *The Spanish Fryar to* John Holles, Lord Haughton 'recommending a Protestant Play to a Protestant Patron … [and his] Noble Family a right, who have been alwaies eminent in the support and favour of our Religion and Liberties'.[47] Thomas D'Urfey, admitted that *Sir Barnaby Whigg* had split its original audience but wrote bullishly in the 1681–2 season once the Tory Reaction to the Exclusion Crisis was underway: 'it had the Honour to please one party; and I am only glad, that the St. *Georges* of Eighty-one got a Victory over the old hissing Dragons of Forty-two; 'tis a good Omen, and I hope portends future successes'.[48] One of the reasons he needed to dedicate the play to the Earl of Berkeley when it was printed was because 'some fat *Whiggs* … made all the interest they could to cry it down' and thus, presumably, imperilled its attractiveness as a quarto playbook.[49]

But the majority of the dedications to 1681 plays are not partisan at all, seeking rather to eschew the language of political division and religious intolerance. Thomas Jordan dedicated his civic entertainment, *London's Joy,* to London's new Lord Mayor, Sir John Moore, in a way that sought to appease Tory and Whig alike: 'By the Right of Succession (which ought to be indisputable), by the Concession of the Commons, who have their legal liberty of *Election*, and by the gracious Condisention of his Majesty, you are for this year, the *Object* of this Day's *Triumph*'.[50] Nahum Tate's controversial re-writing of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, a play centering on questions of usurpation and succession, was prefaced by a dedication to his friend Thomas Boteler, Esq., merely asking him to be gentle in his assessment of a radical re-imagining of Shakespearean tragedy: 'you went Abroad from the Morose Saturnine Humour of our Country, and you brought home the Refinedness of Travel without Affection. Many Faults I see in the following Pages, and question not but you will discover more'.[51]

Even as incendiary a play as Nathaniel Lee's *Lucius Junius Brutus*, banned after a couple of performances in December 1680, for 'scandalous expressions and reflections on the government', carried a dedication to Sir Charles Sackville, sixth Earl of Dorset, in which Lee only stressed his own 'Devotion to Vertue, and your Lordships Service, [which] may render me not altogether unworthy the Protection of your Lordship.'[52] While there might still be a politics in the willingness to receive the dedication of a controversial play, what such patronal protection might mean in this tense, harsh season is revealed by John Crowne's non-partisan dedication of his adaptation of Shakespeare's *I Henry VI* to Sir Charles Sedley: 'I use your Name to guide … this Play through the Press, as I did *Shakespear*'s to support it on the Stage … To hinder this Rush light from being blown out, is the reason why I place your Name before it. I have a mind the Play shou'd be read, and every one will read it, if they think you like it.'[53]

That booksellers were as keen to benefit from such protection as playwrights is evidenced throughout the period. In the early 1670s, Elkanah Settle afforded us a glimpse of the process by which dedications might arrive in a quarto playbook:

> The Bookseller … whispers the Poet, and tells him, Sir, Your Play had misfortune, and all that — but if you'd but write a Dedication, or Preface — The Poet takes the hint, picks out a person of Honour, tells him he has a great deal of Wit, … Disputes the nature of Verse, Answers a Cavil or two, Quibbles upon the Court, Huffs the Critiques, and the work's don. 'Tis not to be imagin'd how far a sheet of this goes to make a Bookseller Rich, and a Poet Famous.[54]

Another less established dramatist, Abraham Bailey, who could not find a dedicatee for his play wrote an 'Epistle to the Reader' instead, admitting that he would have forgone his prefatory address altogether were it not for 'the importunity of the Stationer (who was unwilling to have a blank page but that the Buyer might have enough for his money)'.[55] Such observations offer important context for one of the more remarkable non-partisan dedications of the 1680–1 theatrical season. The bookseller Richard Bentley badgered Thomas Otway to augment his manuscript of *The Soldier's Fortune* with some paratextual matter to make it more substantial and saleable. When Otway was unable to turn up a suitable dedicatee or write a preface in time, he decided, archly, to dedicate the quarto to the bookseller himself:

> Mr. Bentley,
>
> I Have often (during this Plays being in the Press) been importun'd for a Preface; which you, I suppose, would have speak something in Vindication of the Comedy: Now to please you, Mr. *Bentley,* I will as briefly as I can speak my mind upon that occasion, which you may be pleas'd to accept of, both as a Dedication to your self, and next as a Preface to the Book … Wherefore I throw it into Your Arms, make the best of it you can; praise it to your Customers: Sell ten thousand of them if possible, and then you will compleat the wishes of Your Friend and Servant, *THO. OTWAY.*[56]

Otway's hope that Bentley might sell ten thousand copies of his quarto was a witty reworking of the hyperbolic excesses of dedicatory rhetoric since a standard print run for a Restoration play quarto would typically be somewhere between 500 and 750 printed copies; his observation that Bentley might 'praise' his dedication to his customers intimates that making potential buyers aware of a playbook's dedication could indeed have been part of a stationer's regular sales patter.[57]

Selling playbooks in 1681 was evidently, then, a challenging enterprise requiring the ingenuity of all agents in the trade to use their wit and their contacts to make quarto drama as attractive as possible to a potential readership, significant numbers of whom were absenting themselves from the London theatres. Behn's remarkable dedication of *II Rover* to the Duke of York needs to be read in that context. In my work for *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Aphra Behn* I have suggested that her dedication is a spectacular political intervention framed in opposition to the Whig theatrical hit of the previous season, Elkanah Settle's *The Female Prelate* which was dedicated to the Earl of Shaftesbury, the Duke of York's arch-nemesis.[58] But that seems, now, only partly true. Behn's dedication is, surely, just as much a commercially-minded intervention, a gamble, which wagers that its partisan politics and its controversial, toxic dedicatee might catch readers' eyes and make her play more saleable for an entrepreneurial young bookseller like Jacob Tonson when times were tough and margins slim. We might reflect, therefore, that rather than solely emphasising the aristocrat dispensing unknown and unreliable largesse to struggling client-artists in our accounts of Restoration theatre patronage, we should give a more prominent place to stationers and their working relationships with dramatists. One of the things that the quarto edition of Behn's *The Second Part of the Rover* shows us is that in the decade before he revolutionised the bookselling business by transforming subscription publication for lavish folio editions of Dryden's *Virgil* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Tonson, like his playbook-selling peers, was taking different commercial risks: acquiring copy, paying playwrights, and sometimes using famous names to sell books for us to read.[59]

Notes

1. D'Urfey, *A Commonwealth of Women*, sigs. A2^{r}-A2^{v}.
2. On the Monmouth rebellion see Clifton, *Last Popular Rebellion*; Harris, *Revolution*, 78–94.
3. Clifton, 'Monck, Christopher, second duke of Albemarle (1653–1688), army officer and colonial governor'.
4. For an encyclopaedic reading of the politics of Exclusion Crisis plays see Owen, *Restoration Theatre and Crisis*.
5. For excellent biographically-driven studies of Restoration dramatists that use dedications productively see Gray Ham, *Otway and Lee*; Todd, *Aphra Behn*; Anderson Winn, *John Dryden and His World*.
6. A small body of valuable scholarship has considered the appearance of Restoration playbooks in the context of early modern book trade which was developing new ways to accommodate writing that was originally designed for the playhouse rather than the page. See Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation: Writing for the English Stage in England, 1660–1710* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Milhous and Hume, *The Publication of Plays in London, 1660–1800*; Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book, 1480–1880*. However, dedications only feature fleetingly in such studies.
7. There is, of course, a parallel here with the imagined communities created by entry poems as discussed in Niall Allsopp's article above.
8. For Knights's suggestion that the term 'Exclusion Crisis' be reserved to describe the period between November 1680 and March 1681 see Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis, 1678–1681*, 4–5.
9. On the difficulties making a living in the Restoration theatre see Hume, 'The Economics of Culture in London, 1660–1740', 500–8.
10. *The Genuine Works of… George Villers, Duke of Buckingham*, 7; Milhous and Hume, 'Playwrights Remuneration in Eighteenth-Century London', 4.

11. In addition to the details in the case-study section below, on the trouble attracting theatre audiences during the Exclusion Crisis see Depledge, Playbills, Prologues, and Playbooks, 309–10. Hotson, *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage,* 262–7; Owen, *Restoration Theatre,* 63-4.
12. Behn, *The Roundheads,* sig. A2^{r}; Roberts, *The Ladies,* 98. Peter Blayney has calculated that 5% of playbooks were dedicated between 1583 and 1602 with just 31% dedicated across the entire 1583–1642 period; see Blayney, 'The Publication of Playbooks',395.
13. John Dryden fell foul of this aspect of the book trade during and after the Exclusion Crisis when his first publisher, Henry Herringman, sought to capitalise on the notoriety of the Duke of Monmouth, the king's illegitimate son and lionised-then-executed hero of the Exclusionist and Whig cause. He did so by reprinting quartos of Dryden's 1670 tragedy *Tyrannick Love, or the Royal Martyr*, including its dedication to Monmouth as the heroic Achilles and Rinaldo of the age. By 1677, the date of the 3rd quarto, when the political polarisation of the Crisis was particularly intense, this dedication seemed foolish or politically illiterate, especially coming from a committed Tory like Dryden; by 1686, with the 4th quarto, Monmouth recently dead, and Dryden delighted by Tory triumphs and Stuart durability, it looked bizarre or callous.
14. Barnard, 'Dryden and Patronage', 199–220.
15. John Dryden, *Marriage a-la-Mode* (London: Henry Herringman, 1673), sigs. B2^{r}-B4^{v}; Bodleian Library, Oxford. Bod. MS Eng. misc. c. 34 fols. 30^{r}–31^{v}, 'Collectiones Miscellaneae'.
16. Beljame, *Men of Letters and the English Public in the Eighteenth Century, 1660–1744*; Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England: 1650–1700***;** Milhous and Hume, *The Publication of Plays*, 45–51; Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation*; Korshin, 'Types of Eighteenth-Century Literary Patronage', 453–73; Payne, 'The Restoration Dramatic Dedication as Symbolic Capital', 27–42.
17. See the following exemplary studies: Brice Harris, *Charles Sackville, Sixth Earl of Dorset*; Todd, *Aphra Behn*; Winn, *John Dryden*.
18. *The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis*; Stanley Archer, 'Two Dryden Anecdotes', 177–8; Winn, 'Dryden and Dorset in 1692', 392.
19. Summers, ed., *The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell* 5 vols. vol. 5: 401; Harris, *Charles Sackville,* 124.
20. Milhous and Hume, 'Playwrights' Remuneration', 82; Milhous and Hume, *Publication of Plays*, 165.
21. For examples of dramatists acknowledging their patrons' permission to dedicate plays to them see Crowne, *Juliana, or the Princess of Poland*, sig. a3^{r}; Dryden, *Amphitryon*, sig. A2^{v}.
22. See Marcus Nevitt, 'John Dryden, Henry Herringman and the Dedication of Quarto Playbooks', forthcoming.
23. Archer, 'The Epistle Dedicatory in Restoration Drama', 8–13; Kewes *Authorship and Appropriation*, 25; Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book*, 350.
24. Behn, *The Second Part of the Rover*, sig. M3^{v}.
25. He returned in February 1682 after the collapse of the Exclusionist cause. On the Duke of York's time in Edinburgh see Harris, *Restoration,* 171; MacIntosh, *The Scottish Parliament Under Charles II, 1660—1685,* 179–211.
26. *The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons: Volume 1, 1660–1680*, 422.
27. Haley, *The First Earl of Shaftesbury*, 612; Cooper, *A Speech Lately Made by a Noble Peer of the Realm,* 5.
28. Behn, *Second Part of the Rover*, sigs. A4^{v}-A5^{r}.
29. For later texts celebrating the Duke of York's return see *A Congratulatory Poem on His R.H's Entertainment in the City*; *His Royal Highness The Duke of York's Welcom to London: A Congratulatory Poem*; Dryden, *Prologue to his Royal Highness*.
30. Behn's clearest statements of the sexist double-standards underpinning the theatre business are found in her postscript to *The Rover* (1677) and the preface to *The Luckey Chance* (1687).
31. Aphra Behn, *The Feign'd Curizans*, sig. A2^{r}.
32. Ibid., sig. A3^{r}

33. Ibid., sig. A3^{v}.
34. Behn, *Second Part of the Rover*, sig. A4^{r}.
35. D'Urfey, *The Siege of Memphis*, sigs. A3$^{r-v.}$
36. John Dryden, *The Indian Emperour*, sig. A2^{r}.
37. Etherege, *The Man of Mode,* sig. A2^{v}.
38. Behn, *Second Part of the Rover*, sig. A2^{v}.
39. Ibid.
40. Crowne, *Henry the Sixth*, sig. A2^{r}
41. Hotson, *Commonwealth and Restoration Stage*, 267
42. Elkanah Settle, *Fatal Love*, sig. A2^{r}.
43. Dryden, *The Spanish Fryar*, sig. A2^{v}.
44. Stoler Wagonheim, *Annals of English Drama 975–1700: By Alfred Harbage*. The quantitative data informing this article was collected before the major cyber attack on the British Library in late 2023 which led to the ESTC becoming unavailable to researchers. Until such point as the ESTC is restored, a temporary search interface allowing access to the ESTC data can be accessed thanks to the invaluable Print and Probability project: https://estc.printprobability.org.
45. Arber, *The Term Catalogues, 1668–1709*. James Raven has acutely demonstrated that since the *Term Catalogues* do not provide an encyclopaedic overview of book production they can yield unsatisfactory results when counting titles for absolute numbers of total press output in any given year. I posit that using *The Term Catalogue* titles to evaluate contemporary descriptive categories and gauge broad percentage trends in book production (such as the frequency of printed dedications in surviving titles) makes appropriate use of this unique resource. See Raven, *The Business of Books*, 110.
46. A significant portion of the 'miscellanies' published in this year were pamphlets grappling with the politico-religious controversies of the Exclusion Crisis; many of these were anonymously or pseudonymously authored. Such texts were, of course, unlikely to carry a dedication since they strove to conceal all traces of authorship.
47. Dryden, *The Spanish Fryar*, sig. A4^{r}.
48. D'Urfey, *Sir Barnaby Whigg*, sig. A2^{v}.
49. Ibid.
50. Jordan, *London's Joy*, no sig.
51. Tate, *The History of King Lear*, sigs. A3^{r-v}.
52. Lee, *Lucius Junius Brutus, Father of His Country*, sig. A3^{v}.
53. Crowne, *Henry the Sixth,* sig. A2^{v}.
54. Settle, *The Empress of Morocco*, sig. A^{v}.
55. Bailey, *The Spightful Sister*, no sig.
56. Otway, *The Souldier's Fortune*, sigs. A2^{r}-A3^{r}.
57. For the print runs of Restoration play quartos see Milhous and Hume, *Publication of Plays,* 62.
58. Settle, *The Female Prelate*. For the relationship between Behn and Settle in this theatrical season see Behn, *The Second Part of the Rover,* ed. Marcus Nevitt.
59. On Tonson's transformation of subscription publication see Barnard, 'Dryden, Tonson, and the Subscriptions for the 1697 "Virgil"', 129–151; Lynch, *Jacob Tonson, Kit-Cat Publisher*, 104–5.

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